

the sound of breathing by orphan_account

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Summary:

Steve was someone Billy allowed into his head and in the long run his god damn heart. And Billy would swear that he didn't love, that he was incapable of feeling something that had never been expressed toward him, or even taught, but how could he ignore that sense of longing and the way Steve crowded his thoughts at 3am when he couldn't sleep.

the sound of breathing

Author's Note:

fic is very loosely based on the song the sound of breathing by i the mighty.

Focus on the road.

Let my mind drift to see where it goes.

First time Billy realizes he's fucked, he's driving. It's after he comes to, when the drugs have worn off and he's lucid enough to pull his sorry ass to his feet and get to a car. He knows he can't go home without his sister and doesn't intend to, either - facing the wrath of his father for a second time that night isn't something he favours and Billy tries desperately, driving aimlessly around a town he's still not totally used to, to find the redheaded little shit that had evaded him in his precious camaro.

It takes Billy a while to realize that he's in fact driving Steve's car, when his hands are fumbling in the glovebox for a map or hell even a cassette just to keep his wandering thoughts at bay. All his hands land on is a license, which he realizes belongs to Steve. His mind quickly to the events of the night and the way he'd left him; Beaten and bloody and Billy's knuckles are still stained with the evidence. There's a burden that settles in his stomach that feels somewhat like guilt but Billy can't really place that extra lingering feeling that's attached to it. Not until he pulls over, exasperated and sore, head pounding from the drugs that had been pumped into his neck by Max.

It's there that Billy lets go, smashes his already bruised hands against the steering wheel, his legs kicking against the console and it's not that he's mad at Steve, or even trying to replicate the nights events on his car as an extra way to hurt him, no Billy is trying to hurt himself. Because he grasps the sheer magnitude of his actions, of how he'd channeled the anger he'd felt from the run in with his dad into hurting Steve more than he'd ever wanted to. There are tears, hot and stinging at the cuts to his face from where Steve's fist had collided with it and he's not sure if he's crying because of how much he knows

he fucked up, or if it's from being so overwhelmed at the days events as a whole.

Billy never *hated* Steve, Billy never even disliked him. Billy would never admit it but Steve wasn't someone he could ever dislike, even if he forced himself to try. Perhaps at first he felt threatened but in the grand scheme of things, he didn't need to. He slid into the alpha role so easily, stealing away the crown from King Steve himself with just a keg stand and a bad attitude but the one person he couldn't win over, was the one person he'd wanted to win most. Because Steve was never really a competition, Steve was someone Billy allowed into his head and in the long run his god damn heart. And Billy would swear that he didn't love, that he was incapable of feeling something that had never been expressed toward him, or even taught, but how could he ignore that sense of longing and the way Steve crowded his thoughts at 3am when he couldn't sleep.

*So convinced it's what we all deserve,
'till that silent room steals every word.
Now the sound of breath is all you've heard.*

Passing by one another in school had been hard at first, Billy avoided Steve at all costs. Refused to look at him and the way his face was still bruised and he ignored the way his stomach twisted, shouting at him to do something - say anything - in an attempt to fix it. Not that he's sure he ever could, because as much as he's sure that Steve is the forgiving type he doubts that anyone could ever possibly forgive his actions. It's all a confusing mess for Billy, really. How it was so easy for Steve to turn his whole fucking world upside down and the worst part was, Steve didn't even realize he was doing it, nor did he seem to care.

There are a few times that Billy catches Steve staring, when their gazes lock for just a second before Steve rolls his eyes and looks away, almost in disgust and Billy feels sick. He doesn't want Steve to be disgusted, he wants a resolve, he wants Steve to just fucking say something sarcastic back to his playful flirting and little jousts in the locker room, because that's the only place he can't avoid Steve, but Steve doesn't say a thing. Slowly it kills him, messing with his head and Billy is sure one day, when Steve gives him the coldest look he's ever expressed, that Steve has just pulled out his heart and stamped

on it.

They continue like that for a while, until Steve's face is almost completely void of any marks, or bruises. There's still a busted lip, that Steve keeps opening up because he can't stop biting his lip and a cut on his brow that was probably one of the deeper ones. There's a few times that Steve tells Billy to shut up, or calls him an asshole but for the most part though, there's silence. Billy deserves it of course, he doesn't dispute that and he counts the small retorts as progress at least. Then Billy see's an opening, a chance maybe to *actually* talk to Steve and maybe just give him no choice but to talk back.

It's the Snow Ball and Billy notices Steve's car from where he's standing leaning against his darling blue Camaro. Having just dropped Max off, Billy had decided to have a cigarette before he drove himself out of the parking lot and somewhere, anywhere but home. Then he see's Steve, leaning over in his car and staring into the school and a lightbulb goes off in Billy's head, a smirk playing at his lips as he approaches the car. Leaning with his arm up against the door, Billy blocks the view Steve has out of the passenger side window and he blows smoke against the glass. Billy is taken aback when he rolls the window down.

"You're really starting to give me the creeps, Harrington," Billy starts, bringing the cigarette back to his lips to take a long drag and he holds it, breathing in the chemicals and the nicotine as he waits for Steve to bite back. He doesn't however, he simply turns his head away from Billy to look down at his steering wheel. "You'll get a restraining order for staring into a school full of kids."

"Fuck off, Billy," Steve snaps but it had never been that easy, Billy didn't like doing what he was told and he had a habit of doing the exact opposite of what Steve told him to. So instead of 'fucking off', Billy opens the passenger side door and climbs in, settling himself into the passenger seat with ease like he fucking owns the place. He may feel guilty but it wasn't like he was going to let it show, not yet anyway. "Get out of my car."

"Drive, park," Billy says simply and at first Steve shoots back with a no but Billy isn't listening, isn't moving and he doesn't intend to until the other has parked somewhere to talk to him. Against Steve's better

judgement, after a moment of staring with darkened eyes and a displeased expression, Steve starts up his car to drive into a parking space. For the most part, the parking lot is empty - it's a little cluttered by the entrance but Steve had found a space away from the hustle and bustle and that's just what Billy had wanted.

"What the hell is your problem?" Steve asks and it's a simple enough question that Billy had expected long before now but as it comes all he can do is shrug, not wanting to divulge the deepest desires of his heart or how a lot of the reason he is the way he is, is all due to the man he refuses to call his father. Billy laughs, taking the last drag from his cigarette before flicking the butt of it out of the open window. He doesn't turn his body to face Steve, almost afraid to look him in the eye, afraid of the way his heart will surely jump within his chest and cement the fact he's into Steve whether he likes it or not.

"You," Billy replies simply, no emotion behind it because he can't let Steve think he has emotions. It's so stupid, to be so cold all of the time and he knows it's laughable but he'd been marred with the title of faggot his whole life, uttered from the lips of a man who was supposed to take care of him and teach him right from wrong. He sees being gay as something bad, as a disease and it stings to know that the feelings he has only serve to make his sexuality a certainty.

"Are you fucking kidding me? I'm the problem. You check me in basketball, you beat the shit out of me, you treat me and all-" Steve can't finish his tirade because Billy is right there, all anger and dark eyes staring right into Steve's and all there is between them is the sound of breathing, heavy and laboured. There's a hand at Steve's shoulder, pushing him into the seat and Billy is hovering, dangerously close and all Billy can think about is Steve's lips, how they'd feel against his own. So Billy takes the dive, he closes the space between them and connects their lips. It's fierce and hot and Steve for a second even kisses back, his hands finding Billy's arms and not to push him off but to hold him in place. That's when it becomes too real, too scary because Billy can hear his heartbeat in his ears and he can feel his jeans tightening across his groin and he feels as if the world is about to cave in around him - so he pulls back.

"You know what will happen if you ever fucking say a word about this," Billy utters, because all that this ever was between them was

something playful. It was never supposed to get that serious and Billy was never supposed to act on how he felt. Steve is there looking sheepish, dumbfounded, his hands curling into fists and Billy is sure that the other is going to hit him. He'd allow it, he knows it's what he deserves but Steve doesn't swing, instead he clutches at the steering wheel, breathing slow and steady and Billy hates that it's the only sound that can be heard because it echoes, filling his head and clouding his rational thought. Billy feels a tension between them that isn't sexual or akin to any love-like feelings, it's harsh and damning and while Billy should take that as his cue to leave, he doesn't, he can't. He grabs for Steve's wrist, pulling it from the steering wheel so that he can pull Steve in and then there's his other hand, freely moving into Steve's hair and their lips are coming together once again.

*If that's the way it's gotta be with us,
then be aware I'm falling apart.*

Two months pass after the Snow Ball and things have spiralled. Billy's head is consumed by thoughts of Steve and it's hard to contend with, when he's not one for feeling anything or thinking of anyone other than himself. It wakes him at night, in cold sweats and with a problem he needs to fix but it's welcomed. There's a content feeling that comes with liking Steve, like he's safe and that's absurd really when Billy thinks about it because he can only imagine what his father would do to him if he were to ever found out that Billy thought of another man as safe. Billy shook his head, checking himself out in the mirror and pulling up those too tight jeans, the ones that cup the curve of his ass so perfectly that he knows makes Steve practically fucking drool in the hallway.

See things had been good, sort of. There was no label, there was no pressure to be something they weren't, or didn't want to admit they were, there was just rushed handjobs in locker rooms and blowjobs in the back of cars and a lot of making out. There were rough edges and hickies that Steve had to, and struggled to, hide and a lot of flirting. Endless amounts of flirting that was usually followed by some sort of cutting remark but it worked because to everyone else they were just being assholes to each other, that Billy using 'princess' and 'pretty boy' was all sarcasm and not something that Steve loved to hear

pouring from Billy's lips as he came.

The thing was, Billy wanted something more. They had never really established how each of them felt, they'd never really talked more than what they had that night at the Snow Ball but there was a mutual understanding there, silent and forgiving, that Billy never meant to hurt Steve as much as he did that night at the Byers house. Billy liked Steve, a lot more than he ever cared to admit - not that he'd admit any of it at all, yet - but he just couldn't shake the fear that Steve didn't like him the same way, that this was all just a way for Steve to distract himself from the heartbreak Nancy had put upon him when she'd left.

At first Billy could handle that, he didn't mind being a distraction because that meant Steve's lips were on his and his name was all Steve could utter when Billy's mouth was working wonders. He could handle it because Steve was there and for a little while they weren't enemies, they were almost lovers. Then it was all hearts racing and dry lips, with Billy's stomach knotting uncomfortably whenever he saw Steve smile and he couldn't help but think of how people usually equated that to love and how he wasn't so scared of that anymore. He was more scared of rejection.

There they are, Steve and Billy, laying on the hood of his Camaro, parked out in the dark of some park in Hawkins that's a wasteland, vacant of any life or threat of being caught. Billy feels it there, in the way Steve turns his head and presses a kiss to his jaw and Billy, against his better judgement grabs Steve's wrist and whispers his name. It's so small, vulnerable and for the first time since he'd met Steve he lets his guard down. "What the fuck are we doing?"

"I don't know," Steve mutters, watching Billy for a moment with an almost perplexed expression like he can't believe that Billy is capable of feeling anything, of being *soft*. "Can't we just enjoy it?" Steve adds and Billy nods, agreeing because really he doesn't want it to stop and he doesn't want to risk saying something stupid that would make Steve flee, that would stop him from enjoying it. Steve smiles then, pressing his lips to Billy's and there's something in it, an unspoken truth that Billy wishes is the fact Steve loves him too but Billy is never that lucky. So he'll overthink it, later when he's in bed alone and he'll slowly allow it to eat him alive and tear him apart. Steve

was so good at tearing him apart.

*If you can't see yourself with me then what
is left to say? We're falling apart.*

Steve is quiet that night, when Billy shows up at his house in a new, tighter pair of jeans and a smirk that shows Steve just what he's there for. But Steve isn't smiling, he isn't excited to see Billy and he's certainly not pulling him in by the openings of his leather jacket and kissing him roughly - something's wrong. Billy can feel it and his fight or flight begins to kick in, that urge to leave now before he's inevitably disappointed is so strong. It wasn't often that he turned up at Steve's house, an odd weekend when there wasn't a party to attend and Steve had expressed the fact he was home alone was usually what prompted Billy to go over but this, he hadn't expected to turn up and see Steve's solemn expression and feel like things weren't going to end with them naked, wrapped up in sheets.

Billy's heart is thudding in his chest and his hands are clammy, he'd become accustomed to letting his vulnerabilities show around Steve because it's okay there. Steve is still safe and Billy doesn't have to play tough guy or pretend like his father doesn't scare the shit out of him because there's nothing to be afraid of with Steve. No judgements. Billy had trusted Steve with too much and not enough all at the same time, there were still a few rows of bricks in that wall that Steve had yet to batter to the ground but Steve had been the first person that Billy had willingly allowed in with a wrecking ball and fuck was Billy wrecked when it came to Steve.

Everything is confusing because right when Billy feels like everything is about to fall apart, Steve is there in his lap and kissing him, all fire and teeth dragging against lower lips and Billy's hands are pressing into Steve's hips to roll them down against his own. It's good, it's too good and Billy is reminded of why he keeps coming back, of why Steve is everything he needs and probably doesn't deserve, because even if something is going on he's always there and while they couldn't rectify actions with words, they sure as hell could with touches and love bites and that was enough.

But Steve falters and Billy is left sitting back against the couch cushions flustered, aroused and desperate for Steve to come back.

He's cold all of a sudden and Billy wonders if Steve has the heat off or if he's just become so prone to the others body heat that without it he's just that much colder. "I'm seeing someone," Steve says suddenly, he's standing in front of Billy and Billy feels like his ears are ringing. His heart drops into his stomach, he's sure if he was standing it would fucking drop out of his ass and land by Steve's feet, in an ample position for the other to stamp on it and seal the heartbreak once and for all. Billy is angry, he feels like a storm, too big and powerful and filled with emotion and his thunder is the way he swipes a glass off of Steve's coffee table as he stands.

"Is this a joke, Harrington?" Billy asks and Steve isn't scared, Billy notes in his head how fucking hot Steve looks when he's collected but enraged, eyes dark against his hardened features. Steve isn't joking and Billy is only so angry because all he can think is *why not me?* Billy's hands are clenched into fists at his sides but they're not threatening, Billy doesn't intend to swing for Steve and he certainly doesn't intend to hurt him, no Billy's hands are in fists so his nails can dig into the soft flesh of his palm and make him feel anything other than the pain he feels in his chest. "Was this a joke to you?"

"You didn't think we were together, did you?" Steve asks then and Billy has to bite his tongue to keep from saying what he wants to; *yes, I did.* Maybe it's stupid and maybe he did think too much into it but Billy had found it hard to see them as anything else, not when Steve was showing up by his car and asking to hang out, or kissing him unexpectedly when everyone else had left the locker room and initiating so much that drove Billy fucking crazy. This wasn't fair, Steve couldn't think this was fair. Billy's sure it can't get any worse, sure that Steve can't hurt him any more than he has - even if it's something that deep down he knows he deserves - but then Steve speaks again and drives that nail so far into Billy's heart he's sure he'll never be able to put it back together again. "I could never be with you."

That's all it takes, those few little words light a fire in Billy that sends his rage into overdrive and his fist into the wall by where he stands. Steve doesn't falter, staying too calm and too sure and it breaks Billy to know that after all of this, he never really gave a shit. "So what the fuck were we, huh? Is this who King Steve really is?"

"I don't know," Steve mutters and Billy laughs, his head falling back as he does so because it's ridiculous. That Steve wouldn't know what they were, or what they were doing for the past four months and for it to have meant nothing, while Billy had been agonising over his feelings and pining for Steve with every fucking fibre of his being. Billy is also aware that if he doesn't laugh, well that won't be pretty. There'd be tears and Steve doesn't deserve to see him cry, Steve doesn't get to see the way he broke Billy's heart because that's not how this works.

"Fuck you, Harrington," Billy says as he reaches into his pocket for his cigarettes and turns to the door. His hand is shaking, already turning a shade of purple from the force of the hit but he relishes the pain, glad that he can feel the throbbing in his knuckles more than he can feel the heartache. As he brings it to his lips there's a burning at his other wrist, where fingers had snaked their way around and pressed into his skin as if to pull him back and as he looks over his shoulder, Steve is there doe-eyed and silently begging him to stay. Billy pulls his hand away with all the force he can muster, knocking Steve slightly off balance and he ignores the way Steve says his name and how it pushes a lump up into his throat.

Billy doesn't say anything, doesn't risk the tears welling in their ducts to spill over if he does say anything. He stares for a moment, waiting for Steve to take it back but he doesn't and so Billy can't do or say anything to change his mind, he won't. Instead he turns to walk out of the door, letting the silence be the last thing that is shared between them and letting the sound of breathing be all Steve is left with as they close the chapter on what they never could, that Billy always wanted them to be.